

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 15-25 and 30-89 without prejudice. Applicant reserves the right to pursue these claims in a related application.

1. (Original) A method comprising:
encoding digital source material to steganographically convey plural-bit auxiliary data;
passing the encoded source material to a destination through at least one intervening computer;
at said intervening computer, detecting encoded source material transmitted thereby; and
crediting a payment in response to said detection of the encoded source material, in accordance with the plural-bit auxiliary data steganographically conveyed by the encoded source material.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 which includes decoding plural-bit auxiliary data only from source material that has first been tested to indicate the likely presence of such auxiliary data therein.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2 which includes testing source material by reference to an encoding attribute that is supplemental to said encoded plural-bit auxiliary data.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3 in which said attribute is the presence of a characteristic signature signal conveyed by said source material.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4 in which the signature signal is a repetitive noise burst signal.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which said transmitting includes distributing through a network of interconnected computers.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 reporting said detection to a location remote from detection; and crediting royalties based on detection.
8. (Original) A method comprising:
presenting audio source material to a consumer, the material being encoded steganographically to convey plural-bit auxiliary data;
decoding the audio source material that is presented to the consumer to decode the auxiliary data therefrom; and
using the plural-bit auxiliary data to retrieve information about the source material from a remote location.
9. (Original) The method of claim 8 that includes:
storing data indicating the audio source material(s) presented to the consumer;
generating a report based on the stored data, indicating the audio source material(s) presented to the consumer.
10. (Original) The method of claim 8 which includes detecting the presented audio source material with a microphone, and decoding the auxiliary data from a microphone output signal.
11. (Original) A method comprising:
receiving an object steganographically encoded with plural-bit auxiliary data;
decoding the plural-bit auxiliary data from the object;
consulting a registry to determine a proprietor of the object, by reference to said decoded plural-bit auxiliary data; and
making a payment to said proprietor.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11 that includes making said payment through the registry.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11 in which the object is a work of authorship, and the encoding adds a generally imperceptible level of noise to the object as it is perceived by a consumer thereof.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11 in which the registry comprises a database accessible through the internet.

15-25 Cancelled

26. (Original) A method of altering music data to steganographically insert plural bits of watermark data therein, characterized by inserting a first group of said bits for benefit of an end-user of the music data, inserting a second group of bits different than the first for benefit of an artist whose music is encoded by said music data, and inserting a third group of bits different than the first two for benefit of a distributor of the music data.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26 in which the first group of bits represents an internet address of a web site that may be accessed by end-users of the music data.

28. (Original) The method of claim 26 in which the second group of bits includes bits representing a unique identifier for the music data, permitting machine identification of the data and royalty credit to the artist.

29. (Original) The method of claim 26 in which the third group of bits represents usage restrictions to which audio appliances are responsive, thereby driving distribution of additional copies of the music data.

30-89 Cancelled

90. (New) A method comprising:
receiving an object steganographically encoded with plural-bit auxiliary data;
decoding the plural-bit auxiliary data from the object;
consulting a registry to determine an allowed use of the object, by reference to
said decoded plural-bit auxiliary data; and
taking action in accordance with the allowed use of the object.